

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4044

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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TAGS: EAID, SWEL, BG, IN

SUBJ: BANGLADESH FLOOD: FOOD SHIPMENTS

REF: A. DACCA 3706; B. DACCA 3735

BEGIN SUMMARY. THIS CABLE INVITES WASHINGTON AND NEW DELHI REACTUONS TO A SUGGESTION FOR MAXIMIZING FOODGRAIN ARRIVALS HERE IN THE PRE-AMAN HARVEST PERIOD (I.E., BY MID-NOVEMBER) THROUGH THE POSSIBLE DIVERSION TO BANGLADESH OF INDIAN WHEAT PURCHASES AGAINST REPAYMENT WITH PL-480 TITLE I WHEAT FROM FY 1975 PROGRAM. THE EMERGENCY RELIEF BISCUITS SHOULD ALSO BE SHIPPED PROMPTLY. END SUMMARY.

1. AS WE HAVE FREQUENTLY MENTIONED, WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE MOST SERIOUS EFFECT OF RECENT FLOODING WILL BE THE INCREASED POTENTIAL FOR FOOD SHORTAGES IN IMMEDIATE PRE-AMAN HARVEST PERIOD (ROUGHLY OCTOBER THROUGH MID-DECEMBER). THUS, TIMING OF ANY US FOOD DELIVERIES IS HIGHLY CRITICAL. ALLOWING TWO TO FOUR WEEKS FOR MOVEMENT UP COUNTRY, FOOD, IN WHATEVER FORM, MUST ARRIVE CHITTAGONG NLT MID-NOVEMBER TO HAVE ANY EFFECT IN THIS MOST CRITICAL PERIOD.

2. WE HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING HERE POSSIBLE WAYS IN WHICH WE MIGHT ASSURE THE ARRIVAL DURING THIS PERIOD OF THE LARGEST POSSIBLE

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AMOUNTS OF FOODGRAINS. WE HAVE TWO SUGGESTIONS. THE FIRST CON-

CERNS THE SHIPMENTS OF THE 25,000 TONS OF BISCUITS FOR EMERGENCY RELIEF. THE SECOND CONCERNS THE POSSIBLE DIVERSION OF INDIAN COMMERCIAL WHEAT PURCHASES TO BANGLADESH ON A REPLACEMENT BASIS.

3. BISCUITS. THE BISCUITS ARE NEEDED (REFTEL A). HOWEVER, SHIPMENTS MUST REACH BANGLADESH BY NOVEMBER FOR MAXIMUM VALUE. ASSUMING ABOUT THREE WEEKS TO MOVE FOODGRAINS FROM CHITTAGONG TO UPCOUNTRY LOCATIONS, BISCUITS DELIVERED AFTER DECEMBER FIRST WOULD: (A) HAVE LIMITED EFFECT ON FOOD SHORTAGES CREATED BY FLOODING; AND (B) (ASSUMING NO FURTHER MAJOR CROP DAMAGE DUE TO NATURAL CAUSES) BE ARRIVING AT TIME OF GREATEST IN-COUNTRY FOOD AVAILABILITY. THUS, POSSIBILITY FOR DIVERSION AND MISUSE OF THIS ITEM MUCH GREATER THAN IN PRE-AMAN HARVEST PERIOD. WE THEREFORE URGE FDRC MOVE QUICKLY RE SHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS AND ADVISE AMOUNTS WHICH CAN REALISTICALLY BE SHIPPED FOR DELIVERY IN CHITTAGONG PRIOR MID-NOVEMBER.

4. PL-480 TITLE I WHEAT. ALL SHIPMENTS OF WHEAT UNDER THE FY 1974 PL-480 TITLE I AGREEMENT WITH BANGLADESH WILL HAVE REACHED BANGLADESH THIS MONTH. WE DO NOT YET HAVE A NEW TITLE I AGREEMENT BUT EXPECT THAT THE BAR TO PROCEEDING WITH SUCH AN AGREEMENT WILL BE REMOVED VERY SHORTLY INDEED (DACCA 3735). ONCE WE HAVE A NEW AGREEMENT, HOW CAN WE SPEED FOODGRAIN ARRIVALS? IT OCCURS TO US THAT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO WORK OUT AN ARRANGEMENT IN COOPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA BY WHICH SOME AMOUNT OF COMMERCIAL PURCHASES BY INDIA COULD BE DELIVERED TO BANGLADESH AGAINST REPAYMENT WITH PL-480, TITLE I FINANCED WHEAT FROM THE FY 1975 PROGRAM.

5. WE RECOGNIZE THAT INDIA ALSO FACES A PERIOD OF INADEQUATE SUPPLIES AND THE PROSPECT OF A DISAPPOINTING KHARIF CROP IN THE WAKE OF THIS SUMMER'S UNSATISFACTORY MONSOON. ON THE OTHER HAND, HOWEVER, THE MAGNITUDES OF FOOD PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION IN INDIA ARE SO LARGE THAT IT MIGHT WELL BE POSSIBLE FOR INDIA TO TRANSFER A RELATIVELY SMALL QUANTITY (SAY, 100,000 TONS) TO BANGLADESH AGAINST A FIRM COMMITMENT FOR REPLACEMENT WITHIN A SPECIFIED PERIOD WITHOUT DAMAGING GOI FOOD SITUATION. IN LIGHT OF INDIA'S RECORD OF GENEROUS HELP TO BANGLADESH, INCLUDING MOST RECENTLY FLOOD RELIEF DONATIONS, THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT MIGHT WELL GIVE SUCH A PROPOSAL SERIOUS AND SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION.

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6. ACCORDINGLY, WE WOULD APPRECIATE WASHINGTON AND NEW DELHI'S REACTIONS TO THE ABOVE SUGGESTIONS AND ANY FURTHER IDEAS ON HOW BEST TO ENSURE THE PROMPT ARRIVAL OF FOOD-GRAIN SHIPMENTS TO BANGLADESH DURING THE PRE-AMAN HARVEST PERIOD.
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